

## **AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:**

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A process for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising the steps of:

~~the buyer~~ submitting by the buyer a service request to a broker for auctioning;

~~the buyer~~ specifying by the buyer at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be considered from the auction, where N is a number less than number of all bids, and predetermined by the buyer based on tradeoff between price competition among bidders (at a smaller N value) and number of bidders available for buyer selection of a bidder based on factors other than price (at a larger N value);

~~the broker~~ making by the broker the number N available to bidders;

~~the broker~~ notifying by the broker the buyer of the identities of the N lowest bids; and the buyer selecting a bidder from one of the N lowest bids or choosing not to execute the service request job.

Claim 2 (Original): A process as in claim 1, wherein the broker does not allow the buyer to consider any bids greater than the N<sup>th</sup> bid.

Claim 3 (Original): A process as in claim 1, wherein the bidders can bid any amount as long as they beat an outstanding bid by more than a predetermined amount.

Claim 4 (Original): A process as in claim 1, wherein the service request is for print services.

Claim 5 (Original): A process as in claim 1, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating at a node in an information exchange network.

Claim 6 (Original): A process as in claim 5, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

Claim 7 (Currently amended): A process as in claim 1, further comprising the step of ~~the broker~~ making available by the broker to the bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions.

Claim 8 (Currently amended): A process for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising the steps of:

~~the buyer~~ submitting by the buyer a service request to a broker for auctioning;  
~~the broker~~ making available by the broker to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions; and  
~~the potential bidders~~ considering by the potential bidders the rating in deciding on whether to bid on the service request, wherein the higher the rating, the more willing the potential bidders would want to bid, and the lower the rating, the less willing the potential bidders would want to bid.

Claim 9 (Original): A process as in claim 8, wherein the rating includes the number of service requests completed with respect to the number of service requests submitted in prior auctions.

Claim 10 (Original): A process as in claim 8, wherein the service request is for printing services.

Claim 11 (Original): A process as in claim 8, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating at a node in an information exchange network.

Claim 12 (Original): A process as in claim 11, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

Claim 13 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for the buyer to submit a service request to a broker for auctioning;

means for the buyer to specify at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be considered from the auction, where N is a number less than number of all bids, and predetermined by the buyer based on tradeoff between price competition among bidders (at a smaller N value) and number of bidders available for buyer selection of a bidder based on factors other than price (at a larger N value);

means for the broker to make N available to bidders; and

means for the buyer to select a bidder from one of the N best bids.

Claim 14 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 13, wherein the broker is configured such that it does not allow the buyer to consider any bids greater than the N<sup>th</sup> bid.

Claim 15 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 13, wherein the broker is configured such that the bidders can bid any amount as long as they beat an outstanding bid by more than a predetermined amount.

Claim 16 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 13, wherein the service request is for print services.

Claim 17 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 13, wherein the broker is an electronic broker operating at a node in an information exchange network.

Claim 18 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 17, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

Claim 19 (Currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as in claim 13, further comprising means for the broker to make available to the bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions.

Claim 20 (Currently amended): ~~A broker system~~ An apparatus for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for receiving from the buyer a service request for auctioning;

means for making available to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions, wherein the potential bidders consider the rating in deciding on whether to bid on the service request, wherein the higher the rating, the more willing the potential bidders would want to bid, and the lower the rating, the less willing the potential bidders would want to bid; and

means for receiving bids from the bidders.

Claim 21 (Currently amended): ~~A broker system~~ An apparatus as in claim 20, wherein the rating includes the number of service requests completed with respect to the number of service requests submitted in prior auctions.

Claim 22 (Currently amended): ~~A broker system~~ An apparatus as in claim 20, wherein the service request is for printing services.

Claim 23 (Currently amended): ~~A broker system~~ An apparatus as in claim 20, further comprising means to communicate with an information exchange network, wherein the buyer and the bidders communicates with the broker system via the information exchange network.

Claim 24 (Currently amended): ~~A broker system~~ An apparatus as in claim 23, wherein the information exchange network is the Internet.

Claim 25 (Previously presented): A network system for auctioning services, comprising:  
one or more nodes for buyers to access the network;  
one or more nodes for bidders to access the network; and  
a broker system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for the buyer to submit a service request to a broker for auctioning;

means for the buyer to specify at the start of the auction the number N of best bids to be considered from the auction, where N is a number less than number of all bids, and  
predetermined by the buyer based on tradeoff between price competition among bidders (at a

smaller N value) and number of bidders available for buyer selection of a bidder based on factors other than price (at a larger N value);

means for the broker to make N available to bidders; and

means for the buyer to select a bidder from one of the N best bids.

Claim 26 (Previously presented): A network system for auctioning services, comprising:

one or more nodes for buyers to access the network;

one or more nodes for bidders to access the network; and

a broker system for auctioning services requested by a buyer, comprising:

means for receiving from the buyer a service request for auctioning;

means for making available to potential bidders a buyer rating, wherein said rating includes information on the buyer's follow-through of bids in prior auctions, wherein the potential bidders consider the rating in deciding on whether to bid on the service request, wherein the higher the rating, the more willing the potential bidders would want to bid, and the lower the rating, the less willing the potential bidders would want to bid; and

means for receiving bids from the bidders.